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DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/ARP:MBLONG
BAGHDAD FOR LGURIAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/31/2019
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [YM](#)
SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER: SOUTHERNERS ARE PRO-UNITY

Classified By: Ambassador Stephen A. Seche for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

¶1. (C) The Prime Minister told the Ambassador on May 30 that southern discontent consisted of a limited number of people complaining about personal issues, spurred on by exiled leaders and misled by an overly free press. Real southerners are pro-unity, Mujawar said, employing the same rhetoric that President Saleh used recently. End Summary.

Secessionists, What Secessionists?

¶2. (C) An optimistic Prime Minister Ali Mujawar assured the Ambassador on May 30 that unrest in Yemen's southern governorates has been much less severe than has been reported. Saying that no secessionist demonstration has had more than 200 participants, Mujawar characterized the Southern Movement as a small number of malcontents driven by their own personal issues. "If one doesn't have a job, he calls for secession. If another doesn't have land, he calls for secession."

¶3. (C) Mujawar complained that "secessionist voices" from outside Yemen had raised the profile of secessionists. Referring to a recent speech by Ali Salem al-Beidh, the self-proclaimed leader of the Southern Movement, Mujawar said, "Beidh didn't say anything new. He made the same speech that he made (while leaving Yemen) in 1994. Only this time he made it in Munich, not Mukalla." The Prime Minister also warned that secessionists might be in for more than they bargained for. "Yemen would never break into two countries," he told the Ambassador. "It would break into more, smaller units. It would be much worse than Somalia."

Freedom is Part of the Problem

¶4. (C) Mujawar continued, asserting that "I have a feeling that liberty has caused the problem." Saying that the ROYG had been too lax in enforcing existing laws, the Prime Minister complained that southern daily al-Ayyam had "injected hatred into the situation," and "become a mouthpiece for secession." Mujawar told the Ambassador that recent actions taken against newspapers reflected the implementation of existing laws, and noted that Yemen's Supreme Judicial Council had announced a new court to deal with press issues. Complaining that the country had "suffered greatly" from the actions of people like the Bashraheels (an Adeni family that publishes al-Ayyam), Mujawar said that now the ROYG can take such people to court.

Southerners are Pro-Unity

15. (C) Mujawar told the Ambassador repeatedly that on his recent trip to the south he found the residents supportive of unity. "We went to celebrate unity and were pleased by the large crowds that turned out," he told the Ambassador. "People are ready to defend unity. Things are not like they were in 1994, they are better." When the Ambassador asked if recent development projects inaugurated in the south were likely to see fruition in the near future, Mujawar asserted they were. "Some of them were projects that had already been completed," he said. Others were ones for which we laid the cornerstone, and I cannot lay the cornerstone unless a project is fully approved and funded." Mujawar added that the ROYG has begun to implement reforms that will make southerners even more content. "We are going back to the right path," he said.

Comment

16. (C) Mujawar's message matched that which President Saleh gave to the visiting Deputy Director of the CIA on May 28, and didn't stray at all from the official ROYG line. While Saleh and those close to him try to play down southern unrest, demonstrations continue, leading to more reports of violence and death. If they grow in size and spread across the south, the ROYG will be hard-pressed to maintain the position that the problems are caused by only a few malcontents. End Comment.
SECHE